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FACE-ENAMELLING.

As we know there is 'nothing new under the sun,' we are not surprised to hear that the inhabitants of ancient Nineveh employed a process which may fairly be termed 'enamelling.' The skin was first rubbed with pumice-stone, and afterwards coated with white paint. Mr Layard points out that traces of black and white pigments are visible on the eyes and eyebrows of the sculptures; these parts of the bas-reliefs appear to have been more carefully painted than any other. The flesh of the last king of Nineveh, we are told by Athenaeus, was as white as milk, and his eyes and eyebrows were painted black. Astyages is reported to have also had his eyes and face thus painted. A lady's dressing-case found at Thebes contained a goodly array of jars and bottles containing perfumes and cosmetics.

Xenophon, in his *Cyropaedia* (b. i. c. 3), relates that when Cyrus, at the age of twelve years, went with his mother to visit his grandfather Astyages, king of the Medes, he found him adorned with paint round his eyes, colour on his face, and a magnificent wig of flowing ringlets. The Egyptians used also a black powder called kohl or kohol, which, applied with a wooden or ivory bodkin to the pupils of the eyes, increased their brilliancy, and made them appear larger—a custom still prevalent throughout the East—and, we regret to say, not unknown in this country. Mr Rimmell, in his *Book of Perfumes*, tells us that it is made in the following way: The inside of a lemon is removed, filled up with plumbago and burned copper, and placed in the fire till it becomes carbonised; then powdered in a mortar with coral, sandal-wood, pearls, ambergris, the wing of a bat, and part of the body of a chameleon—the whole having been previously burned to a cinder, and moistened with rose-water while hot.

Some think that when Jezebel, in Holy Writ, is stated to have 'painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window,' it means that she merely gave a dark hue to her eyes. Ezekiel explains this mode of painting when he says:

'Thou didst wash thyself, paintest thine eyes, and deckest thyself with ornaments.'

Face-painting was not practised by the Greek ladies in the time of Homer; but they afterwards used white-lead, and touched up their cheeks and lips with vermillion or a root called *pederos*, similar to alkanet-root. The Romans, according to Pliny, used cosmetics to preserve their complexion, consisting of pea-flour, barley-meal, eggs, wine-lees, hartshorn, bulbs of narcissus, &c. A sort of poultice was made with these, which was kept on the face all night and part of the day. Poppaea, the wife of Nero, invented an ointment for the face, called from her name *Poppaeanum*, made of asses' milk. Ovid, in his *Medicamina Faciei*, says that two pounds of the barley brought from the Libyan fields, mixed with an equal quantity of bean-flour, ten eggs, the sixth part of a pound of hartshorn passed through a sieve, and twelve narcissus bulbs, two ounces of gum, as much Tuscan seed, and eighteen ounces of honey, will render the face smoother and more brilliant than a mirror. The Romans also used *fucus*, a kind of rouge, for the cheeks, as early as the days of Plautus; pots of this substance made of rock-crystal, similar to the modern, were found at Herculaneum. The rouge, or *purpurissus*, used by the Greek and Roman ladies was of a rose-colour, and made of a white chalk, dissolved in a strong purple liquid, twice precipitated. The last precipitate was the rouge. They also used a red Syrian root called *rizium*, white lead (*cerussa*), and chalk (*creta*). The use of both red and white paint was, in the time of Augustus, confined to women of quality.

We give the following story in outline, to shew the effect these things had upon the ancients. It was furnished to Layard's *Nineveh*, in 1842, by Mr Samuel Birch of the British Museum.

Artæus, king of the Medes, had amongst his subjects one Parsondes, a man renowned for his courage and strength. Parsondes having observed that Nanarus, the governor of Babylon, was very effeminate in his person, and shaved himself carefully, conceived a dislike to him, and asked the king to transfer his post to him. The king refused; and

Nanarus having heard what had occurred, swore to be revenged on Parsondes. The gallant Mede was induced to drink sweet wines mixed with intoxicated drugs, and was taken before Nanarus, who asked him why he had tried to supplant him. 'Because I thought myself more worthy of the honour, for I am more manly and more useful to the king than you, who are shaved, and have your eyes underlined with stibium, and your face painted with white-lead.' Nanarus then swore by Belus and by Mylitta (the Babylonian Venus), that he would quickly make Parsondes softer and fairer than any woman. He had him shaved and rubbed with pumice-stone, bathed twice a day, his eyes underlined, and taught to sing and play upon the harp, and his hair plaited like a woman's. The experiment succeeded, and the manly Parsondes became as effeminate as Nanarus. Artæus, the king, after seven years, heard of his favourite, and demanded that he should be restored. The ambassador who came with this demand was invited by Nanarus to a banquet, in the course of which one hundred and fifty female players entered the hall, and Nanarus asked the ambassador which of the women he thought superior to the rest in beauty and accomplishments; upon which he pointed to Parsondes. The latter was then set free, and contrived on his return home to inflict summary punishment on his enemy.

The orientals use *schnouda*, a perfectly white cream, composed of jasmine pomade and benzoin, by means of which a very natural but transient bloom is imparted to the cheeks. They also use *batikha*, a complexion powder, made of cowrie-shells, rice, borax, lemons, and eggs, with beans and lentils. Sonnini, in his *Travels in Egypt*, says: 'So much care is not thrown away; nowhere are the women more uniformly beautiful, nowhere do they possess more the talent of assisting nature, nowhere, in a word, are they better skilled or more practised in the art of arresting or repairing the ravages of time, an art which has its principles and a great variety of practical recipes.' Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, when in the East, applied some of the celebrated Balm of Mecca to her cheeks; but instead of making her 'beautiful for ever,' her face was red and swollen for three days. (*Letter xxvii.*)

The Chinese belles, having at night bedaubed themselves with a mixture of tea, oil, and rice-flour, scrape this off in the morning, and apply a white powder, called 'Meen Fun,' touching up the cheeks and nostrils and the tip of the tongue with a little carmine, and sprinkle rice-powder over the face as a finishing-touch.

The celebrated Hungary Water was first prepared in 1370 by Queen Elizabeth of Hungary, who had the recipe from a hermit, and became so beautiful through the use of it, that her hand was asked in marriage at the age of seventy-two by the king of Poland. In an ancient French perfumery-book, entitled *Les Secrets de Maistre Alexys de Piedmontois*, we find the following curious formula for a marvellous water: 'Take a young raven from the nest, feed it on hard eggs for forty days, kill it, and distil it with myrtle-leaves, talc, and almond oil.' In a French poem of the thirteenth century (printed in Fairholt's collection of *Satirical Songs and Poems on Costume*, published by the Percy Society in 1849), descriptive of the wares of a mercer, he declares: 'I have cotton with which they *rouge*, and whitening with which

they whiten themselves.' Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, introduced many cosmetics, perfumes, &c. from abroad, into the court of Elizabeth, to the great delight of the Virgin Queen and her ladies.

The Duchess of Newcastle (*temp. Charles I.*) recommends ladies to remove the first skin off the face with oil of vitriol, that a new skin may come in its place; a very strange way of improving the complexion. Shakespeare, in *Hamlet* (act iii. sc. 1), says: 'I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another.' And Evelyn, in his *Diary* (1654), remarks: 'I now observed how the women began to paint themselves, formerly a most ignominious thing, and used only by women of bad character.' But as early as 1602, we gather from an allusion in Marston's *Antonio and Mellida*, that courtiers of the male sex occasionally used colour for their faces. Rossaline, one of the characters in the play, enumerating the faults of her suitor, says: 'The fifth paints, and has always a good colour for what he speaks.'

Bulwer, in his *Artificial Changeling* (1650), tells us: 'Sometimes they think they have too much colour; then they use art to make them pale and fair. Now they have too little colour; then Spanish paper, red leather, or other cosmetical rubrics must be had.' Even Waller complains of his Sacharissa:

Pygmalion's fate reversed is mine;
His marble took both flesh and blood;
All that I worshipped as divine,
That beauty—now 'tis understood—
Appears to have no more of life
Than that whereof he framed his wife.

And the Puritan Stubbes, in 1658, observes:

And first I will begin to touch
Upon this daubing paint;
Their pride that way it is so much,
It makes my Muse grow faint.

The court ladies of Charles II. used paint very freely.

The author of *England's Vanity* (1683) is very severe upon the subject of paint. He ends his remarks thus: 'The French have a good litany: "From beef without mustard, a servant which overvalues himself, and from a woman which painteth, good Lord, deliver us."

Mr Fairholt says Spanish paper was used for the purpose. It was made up into little books, and a leaf was torn out, and rubbed upon the cheeks, the vermilion powder which covered it being thus transferred to the face.

In the *Spectator* (1711), an unfortunate husband complains: 'As for my dear, never man was so enamoured as I was of her fair forehead, neck, and arms, as well as the bright jet of her hair; but, to my great astonishment, I found they were all the effect of art. Her skin is so tarnished by the practice that, when she first wakes in the morning, she scarce seems young enough to be the mother of her whom I carried to bed the night before. I shall take the liberty to part with her the first opportunity, unless her father will make her portion suitable to her real, not her assumed countenance.' Walpole says that Lady Mary Wortley Montagu not only used the cheapest white paint she could get, but left it on her skin so long that it was obliged to be scraped off her face. Beautiful Lady Coventry's husband used to chase her round

the dinner-table, that he might remove the obnoxious colour with a napkin!

Respecting face-painting in modern times, we know from advertisements that it is extensively practised. Some paints particularly used by actors. Madame Rachel, in her examination before the Insolvent Debtors' Court in 1862, stated that her *profession* was a lucrative one, and that she sometimes obtained more than twenty guineas for enamelling a lady's face. So that a lady may be swarthy or wrinkled, withered or sallow, and yet appear before the world in the blooming graces of sweet sixteen, and

With curious arts dim charms revive,
And triumph in the bloom of fifty-five.

We certainly prefer

A woman's face, with Nature's own hand painted.

A fashion analogous to that of painting, and which prevailed about the same time, was that of wearing black patches, cut into various shapes. Glapthorne, in his *Lady's Privilege* (1640), says: 'Look you, signor, if it be a lover's part you are to act, take a black spot or two. I can furnish you; 'twill make your face more amorous, and appear more gracious in your mistress' eyes.' In a rare broadside, printed in 1646, styled *The Picture of an English Anticke*, we have a copper-plate of a first-rate exquisite of the period, who has his face spotted with patches. But this was only an old custom revived, for the practice was fashionable with the Roman dames in the latter days of the Empire. Regulus, a famous Roman lawyer, used to anoint his right or left eye, and wear a white patch over the right side or the left of his forehead, as he was to plead either for the plaintiff or defendant.

In *Wit Restored*, a poem printed in 1658, we are told of a lady :

Her patches are of every cut,
For pimples and for scars;
Here's all the wandering planets' signs,
And some of the fixed stars,
Already gummed, to make them stick,
They need no other sky.

There is a curious engraving of a lady, with patches in the form of triangles, half-moons, stars, and crosses, in the title-page to a sermon by Andrew Jones, entitled *Morbus Satanicus*, or the Sin of Pride (15th ed. 1666), in which he speaks of it as a common custom with our proud ladies 'to spot their faces with black patches.' Mr Pepys, it appears, did not object to them, for he declared that his wife, with two or three patches, looked far handsomer than the Princess Henrietta. The same gentleman says that the Duchess of Newcastle wore many patches 'because of pimples about her mouth.' The author of *God's Voice against Pride in Apparel* (1683), says that the black patches remind him of plague-spots; 'and methinks the mourning-coach and horses, all in black, and plying in their foreheads, stands ready harnessed to whirl them to Acheron, though I pity poor Charon for the darkness of the night, since the moon on the cheek is all an eclipse, and the poor stars on the temples are clouded in sables, and no comfort left him but the lozenges on his chin, which, if he pleases, he may pick off for his cold.'

A writer in the *World* for 1754, says: 'Though I have seen with patience the cap diminishing to

the size of a patch, I have not with the same unconcern observed the patch enlarging itself to the size of a cap. It is with great sorrow that I already see it in possession of that beautiful mass of blue which borders upon the eye. Should it increase on the side of that exquisite feature, what an eclipse have we to dread! But surely it is to be hoped that the ladies will not give up that place to a plaster which the brightest jewel in the universe would want lustre to supply.' The present generation may possibly witness a revival of the fashion, as it has witnessed the reappearance of the hoop, high-heeled boots, long gloves, &c. of the Georgian period. All we can say is, we hope not.

FOUND DEAD.

CHAPTER IX.—MR CHARLES STEEN PICKS UP SOME INFORMATION.

THE change in Mr Charles Steen's social position—but yesterday in the paupers' ward, and to-day well and warmly clad, travelling by first-class on special mission—had been great and sudden. But then he was used to changes. Moreover, he had been in the straits of penury only a few days, which seemed more like an unpleasant dream than rude reality. The rank of a gentleman was what he had always held. He felt himself, therefore, rather reinstated in his former condition than elevated from a very low one. And as for the future, he had never had any great expectations in that direction; and he was but seventeen, and by nature buoyant. Not a passenger who saw him step into the train would have imagined this handsome young gentleman to have but five pounds in the world which he could call his own, or that the very mourning suit he wore belonged to another man. His mind was scarcely at all taken up with his own affairs; he thought of his patron, who was still an enigma to him, to solve which there now seemed only one way—namely, to conclude that he was not entirely sane. And he thought of the undertaking on which he himself was at present engaged. What sort of people would be his hostess and her daughter; and how would they conduct themselves in their calamity? Although Charles Steen had suffered so much at the dire hands of death, he had never been brought face to face with it. When the news of good Captain Mangoe's demise had reached Cayenne Lodge, it had been borne with equanimity by all, and by his widow with the most submissive resignation. The news of loss—especially when coming from far away, and thereby already seeming long ago—is a very different thing from that visible bereavement, when the dead are brought home to tell their own ghastly tale. It did not, as he thought of this, seem so altogether strange that Mr Frederick Blissett should prefer to go down to Allgrove by deputy. He had evidently disordered nerves (although he might not be quite so ill as he wished it to be supposed), and so melancholy a visit would upset him. Perhaps, too, his late brother and himself had not been upon the most cordial terms. Or perhaps he and the widow were at variance. This latter supposition seemed likely enough, since the daughter of the dead man, and not herself, had written to apprise the painter of what had happened; and it was to Miss Blissett that the note was addressed, which he had read as he came along

in the Hansom, and now, as he lay back in his corner of the railway carriage, perused again.

MY DEAR CHRISTIE—Words fail me to write what I feel concerning the terrible misfortune which (I am sure) has overwhelmed you and your poor mother. Nor, unhappily, can I come down at once, in person, as I naturally desire to do. I am exceedingly unwell, and have been so for several days. The night before last, in particular, though I retired early and rose late—contrary, as you know, to my usual custom—I was seriously ill, and last night not much better, as you will learn from the young gentleman who bears this note. The nature of his position, as my companion and confidential clerk (if I may so term him), will explain how far from well I have been—to have made it necessary to employ such a person. I have been fortunate in finding a youth of such good birth and education (as you will perceive for yourself) to fill the post, and although he has been with me but a short time, I have every confidence in him. Pray, ask your good mother to communicate her wishes to him upon all matters wherein it lies in my power to serve her, and he will carry them to me. How egotistic all this must sound to you, whose thoughts are occupied with the memory of a far better man than your poor Uncle Fred, ever was, or will be! Alas, alas! How I wish I could comfort you both by word or deed. If I find myself at all equal to the exertion, I shall of course come down to pay the last sad tribute to my dear and lamented brother: of the date, &c. my young friend (Mr Charles Steen) will of course inform me.—With the deepest sympathy for you and your bereaved mother—to whom, please, remember me with affectionate respect—I am always your loving uncle,

FRED. BLISSETT.

As the young man folded this letter up, and placed it in his breast-pocket, he became for the first time fully conscious of the presence of two fellow-passengers, although he had already flown over a mile or two in their company. So rapt he was, however, in reflection upon his patron's letter—which seemed, somehow, to corroborate his suspicions that Mr Frederick Blissett and his sister-in-law were not on the best of terms, a circumstance which was likely to render his own mission additionally embarrassing—that perhaps he would not have noticed them even now, had not his attention been drawn to their conversation by the mention by one of them of Allgrove. Yes; certainly the gentleman in the white cravat had stated that he had come from Allgrove that morning. If so, he was probably returning to it. He might then become his fellow-passenger from Chudleigh Station; they might take a conveyance between them, unless, indeed (and the stranger's double eyeglasses were set in gold), he should have a private carriage to meet him. Even in that case, however, a divine, as he evidently was, would doubtless be benevolent enough to offer him a lift. In youth, we crave for companionship. The past does not yet afford us sufficient food for reflection; and we have not found out that nine chance acquaintances out of ten are mere repetitions of the same type, and dead conversational failures.

'I should not have gone to town at all, if it had not been absolutely necessary,' continued the old gentleman; 'and I am running back again, as you see, in case I can possibly be of any use. That is excuse enough: but indeed I should not have dreamed of calling upon him.'

'I know he was never a favourite of yours, Mr Mellish,' said the other gravely, a bluff rubicund gentleman, with very pleasant gray eyes, and a hearty voice, which he seemed to be endeavouring to soften, to suit some sorrowful topic. 'The new squire will be very different from the last.'

'A Satyr to Hyperion, Mr Lane.'

'I don't know about Hyperion, parson; but Frank Blissett was just the best fellow I ever met at cover-side; and as for his successor being a satyr, I am afraid that is true, for he always had a biting tongue.'

Mr Mellish's face gave one great twinkle, so that his spectacles looked for an instant like the cover of a cucumber-frame that catches the sun. Then he sighed, as though reproaching himself for having given way to merriment, however short-lived.

'Yes,' said he; 'Mr Frederick is sharp enough at tongue-fence, and, indeed, a clever fellow altogether. His tricks in India shewed that, if they did not do much credit to his morality.'

'Ay; he was the first to find out how to win a cheroot sweepstakes: that, by dipping your weed in saltpetre, you could keep it alight in a whirlwind.'

'Yes; and then that pice story shewed a good deal of ingenuity.—Don't you know it? Well, it was after he had to leave the army on account of money-matters, that he got made collector, or some other responsible officer of that kind, in the Civil Service; his previous conduct recommending him (I suppose) so particularly to the Indian authorities for such a post. However, he got it. Well, the money intrusted to him had to be sent to Calcutta at considerable intervals of time; and his native clerk being of the same sort of practical turn as his master, used to substitute small coins (pice) for the rupees in the treasury-bags, and lend the government-money to his fellow-natives—for a good consideration. Mr Frederick got a hint of this; but, unfortunately, a little late. The inspector had given him notice that he should visit him officially next week. The money was gone, and the collector was answerable. If the clerk had been accused at once, it was certain that not a rupee would be returned. The man would take his punishment, and the native creditors would repudiate the transaction. But his master sent for the clerk, and informed him that henceforward the money would be returned less frequently than usual; only the accounts must be made afresh, to suit the new state of things. "We will go over the rupees on Thursday together," said he. The clerk flies to his creditors, explains how matters stand, and promising more favourable terms in future, gets most of the money back, and borrows the remainder—to be repaid on Friday. The rupees were made all right, though only as the clerk hoped *pro tem.* After they had gone over them together—"Well," said Mr Frederick, "I am glad that all those pice have been taken away, my friend, which I found here the day before yesterday. But you thoroughly understand the reason why I am obliged for the future to dispense with your valuable services."

'How he enjoyed making that speech, I'll answer for it!' said Mr Lane, chuckling merrily.

'Ay; and how he squinted, I warrant,' assented Mr Mellish.

'I suppose this Frederick Blissett gets all the property?' observed Mr Lane regretfully.

'O yes. It is all entailed upon heirs-male; the

consequence is that those dearest and nearest to the deceased are almost penniless. Our savage island custom, sir.'

'The greatest bulwark of the British constitution, Mr Mellish, although I deeply regret its working in the present instance.—How much will the poor widow—Upon my life, I feel like a child when I speak of her. I never shall forget that interview with her yesterday. That damned little Fungus (I beg your pardon, parson) wouldn't see me through it, and you were out; so I had to break the news to her. Not but that, directly she saw my face, she knew what had happened. "My Frank is dead!" said she. It was terrible to hear and see her, sir.' And Mr Lane executed a flourish of trumpets, by aid of his nose and his pocket-handkerchief, in order to conceal his emotion.

'Mrs Blissett and Christie will have about two hundred pounds a year,' said the clergyman gravely, 'and that cottage by the river to live in.'

'But I hope this fellow will behave like a gentleman to them—will set by a portion of his own.'

'Not he, sir,' interrupted Mr Mellish. 'Though, if he made such an offer, mind you, the widow would never accept it. She is an excellent judge of character, and she knows her brother-in-law well; and I know him too. In the first place'—here the speaker's voice sank to a whisper, and he looked suspiciously at Charles Steen, who, I am afraid, was counterfeiting sleep ('not right, but very natural,' as his patron would have said)—'in the first place, Frederick Blissett is half mad: he is touched in his upper-decks.'

'What! and he such a clever fellow?'

'Yes, sir.

Madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

He has all the cunning and malignity of "one distract;" and he is as grasping and avaricious (although not mean in little things, like our friend Fungus) as Old Scratch. No; Mrs Blissett will be spared the embarrassment of refusing any generous arrangements made for her by her brother-in-law, you may take my word for that.'

'Nay; I shall hope better things of him than what you tell me, Mellish. His new position may alter his character. He's been confoundedly hard-up, you know, all his life, and that makes a fellow look sharp after the main chance. As the Squire of Morden Hall, he may behave better.'

'Or will seem to do so, doubtless,' observed the other drily.

'Oh, what a world of vile ill-favoured faults
Looks handsome in three thousand pounds a year!

I have not patience to think of it. Fancy that poor lady in her sad condition turned out of her house, with all its loving memories, to make room for such a successor! Bah! If I was not a clergyman, I could say it was almost enough to make one disbelieve in a Providence.'

'Yes, indeed,' returned the other, tapping his boot reflectively. 'It's a most awkward thing. I wonder what will be done about the shooting. I daresay, being a painter, he don't know one bird from another—flying. The Hunt, too, will lose a good subscription. He'll be made a magistrate of course. Umph! I daresay I shall have trouble

enough with him. These interlopers are always questioning decisions, and setting themselves against the chairman.—Hollo, here's Chudleigh! I had no idea we had got so far. You get out here, Mellish, of course?'

'Yes. You will be at Allgrove the day after to-morrow, for the inquest?'

'Certainly: it will be my duty. Although, indeed, the proceedings will be merely nominal.'

'Did you say this was Chudleigh, sir?' asked Charles Steen, rousing himself with a yawn.

'Yes, indeed; here we are.'

The train slid slowly along the platform as he spoke.

'Can I get any conveyance, do you know, sir, to take me to Allgrove—to a house called Morden Hall?'

Mr Mellish, who, unencumbered with luggage, was about to hurry away to where an open carriage with one horse could be seen awaiting him at the station-gate, was arrested at once by these words.

'Morden Hall? You can't go there. Death and mourning are in that house, sir.'

'I know it. That is why I am sent, sir.'

'Oh, I see: the undertaker's man from London,' muttered the parson peevishly. 'I should have thought she had had more sense than to spend a half-year's income upon such mummary.—Here, sir, you may take a seat by me, if you have not much luggage, and it isn't'— He was about to say a 'coffin and ostrich feathers;' but he stopped himself just in time, and added 'very heavy.'

The portmanteau was put in; the groom, who was also gardener and butler, took his place behind, and off drove the rector with his late companion.

'What house do you represent, sir?' asked the former sharply, after a long silence.

'I came down to Allgrove on the part of Mr Frederick Blissett of Conduit Street.'

'Ah, exactly; I'm glad to hear it. He has taken all these expenses upon his own shoulders, has he? Very proper, very right. But you must wait till after the inquest. It's no use your going to the Hall; indeed, that's out of the question. The body's at the public-house at present.'

For a moment, Charles Steen entertained the suspicion that another body—namely, Mr Mellish—had been at the public-house but recently; then the true state of the case flashed upon him.

'You mistake my errand,' said he smiling; 'I am the secretary and confidential agent of Mr Frederick Blissett.'

'The deuce you are!' ejaculated the rector, the recollection of his late conversation with Mr Lane causing his honest face to bear a sudden glow. 'Why, my friend and I were gossiping about him as we came down in the train. Did you not hear us?'

'I did hear something of it, sir, but not enough to justify my interference; besides, I have only known Mr Blissett a little while myself, and am not in a position—I am sure he would not wish it—to say to two strangers: "You must not express your opinion upon this gentleman in my presence." If I am wrong, I owe him an apology, and you also, sir.'

'A very proper observation, sir,' said Mr Mellish, upon whom the good-looks and well-chosen speech of the young man were having their effect, notwithstanding his natural prejudice against the envoy of the new squire. 'I conclude, then, that

your—that Mr Frederick is not himself coming down to Allgrove immediately!'

'No, sir. I am charged with a letter to Miss Christina'—

'Christie,' interrupted Mr Mellish. 'Nobody calls her Christina: even to strangers she is introduced as Miss Christie.'

'Well, sir, I have a letter for her to explain that Mr Frederick Blissett has been ill for some time, and—'

'He was well enough three days ago,' broke in Mr Mellish bluntly. 'He wrote to his poor brother (as I happen to know) without saying a word about ill health; and the squire wrote back by return of post—yes, the day before yesterday, to ask him to hunt at Newnham, which he would scarcely have done had he known Mr Frederick to be unwell. However, that of course is not your business—nor, indeed, mine either.—Do you see that vast ploughed field, cut in the middle by a straight green road, yonder?'

The rector had stopped the horse, to breathe him, at the top of a long ascent. Before them lay a wide plateau of down, over which the November wind blew very keenly; but on the right hand, whither the speaker was pointing with his whip, there was a hollow—a vast trough, as it were, in the rolling downland, where the plough had sought to take away its reproach from the barren soil.

'That was the place where your friend's brother was found dead but yesterday,' said Mr Mellish gravely.

Associated with such a catastrophe—for which its bleak and sterile solitariness seemed very fitting—it was not a scene easily forgotten. Charles Steen regarded it long and fixedly. He kept silence for some distance, and his voice was sad, as he presently remarked: 'From what you, or your friend, let fall in the railway carriage, I understand that this poor gentleman has not left his family well provided for. Let me say for your comfort that in this letter here Mr Frederick writes to Miss Christie: "Pray, ask your good mother to express her wishes upon any matter wherein it lies in my power to serve her;" and I am bound to say that I have myself experienced most genuine proofs of his generous—and, yes, certainly unselfish kindness.'

'I am right glad to hear it, sir,' exclaimed the rector. 'To do good deeds is a certain means of living down a bad reputation. Not, of course,' added Mr Mellish with precipitation, 'that that is the case with your friend and patron; but we country folks like familiar faces, and when one is gone (such a kindly one, too, as this one was!), we regard that which comes to fill its place with suspicious prejudice. But Mr Frederick, being such as you represent him, will win his way in time. As for you, it does you credit to speak so well of your benefactor, and we shall be good friends, I see. "Upon any matter wherein it lies in his power to serve her," he says, does he? I am glad of that, for Christie's sake, at all events: the widow will surely never stand in Christie's way. Look you here, young gentleman. I am an old man, and a minister (although an unworthy one) of God Almighty. By virtue of my age and office, I may urge upon you, although a stranger, considerations which from another would be impertinent. Be a friend—you who have the ear of your patron—to this widow and orphan, as far as lies in your

power. They have suffered a terrible blow, which at present numbs them to the minor trials that are awaiting them—poverty among the rest.'

'You may trust me, sir. I know what it is to be poor myself.'

'Ay; but you have not had wealth, and lost it.

To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing in fortune
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear;
The lamentable change is from the best.

Do you understand? When we are suffering from the grief of loss, we underrate all other calamities, notwithstanding that they have very bitter stings. If you find these poor women careless of the future, you must take what measures you can for their advantage. God has given you a great responsibility at a very early age.'

'Alas, sir, I have no power, no influence with Mr Blissett whatever. My position with him is of the humblest.'

'No matter: he must see with your eyes, since he is not here to see for himself. Your position is humble, but I am much mistaken if you are not a gentleman.' ('By all means will I gain him,' thought the parson, like another St Paul.) 'You must promise me to do your best.'

'I do, indeed, sir.'

'There's a good boy! Look, yonder is Allgrove—and a precious steep pitch this is that dips down into it; that winding river is the Rill; and see, that fine place amid the trees, with all the blinds drawn down, because the light and life are gone out of it, that is the house you are bound for—Morden Hall.'

CHAPTER X.—THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

At the door of the little white vicarage which opened on the village street—although, behind, it had a pleasant garden extending to the river-bank—the parson's sober nag stopped short, and Mr Mellish had to use his whip-lash, albeit as lightly as though he were whipping a stream instead of a strawberry mare. 'I shall take you on to the house, Mr Steen, myself,' said he. 'I should have gone there presently, in any case. But as Mr Frederick's emissary, you might not have the sort of reception which I flatter myself my personal introduction will insure you. If you find the widow—poor soul—a little antagonistic, you must not mind. She always imagined that her husband was not well treated by his younger brother, and at such a time as this, that idea—whether well grounded or not—is sure to be intensified.'

'I see, sir, and I am very much obliged to you,' answered the young man gloomily. His mission seemed to grow more distasteful as he drew near its accomplishment. It was evident that he was the representative of one who was far from popular, and what was required of him would demand tact as well as delicacy. It was not to be expected that he should feel a deep regret for the loss of one whom he had never seen, and had only heard of within the last twenty-four hours; and yet, in this atmosphere of woe, he must be careful to comport himself like others who had a reason for their grief. The woman who opened the lodge-gate to let them through, had eyes red with weeping, and when Mr Mellish asked after her mistress, burst into tears.

'She keeps up wonderful, sir, I believe, considering,' sobbed she. 'I should ha' thought it would ha' killed her.'

'God forbid, Martha! We must all keep up for her sake and Miss Christie's,' said the parson kindly.

'Yes, sir; but it's hard to do't. Oh, to think as I shall never open the gate to him again! He had always a smile and a pleasant word for me, sir. And I was not up to let him out yesterday morning, sir. Perhaps his last thought of me was as I was a slugga-bed. There's his horse's hoof-marks, look you, yet, sir.' And again Martha's ready tears rained down her cheeks, as the vehicle drove on.

The thaw had continued, and there was a melancholy dripping from the park trees; the woods were hid in vapour, and even on the comparatively high ground on which the Hall was situated, the evening mist was rising, though it was yet early. The house itself, with its closed shutters, stared at the visitors like one with sightless eyes. No sign of life was to be seen as they drew up, except a little spaniel, which jumped from the mat on the front-door, and ran to meet them, but upon seeing it was not the master he in vain expected, slouched away in silent disappointment.

'Poor Scaramouch! He has lost a good friend, like the rest of us,' said Mr Mellish with a sigh.

These incidents, and the gloom of the scene about him, were not without their effect upon Charles Steen, whose disposition was singularly sympathetic, even for his time of life. He began to feel a personal interest in the sad fate of one so universally regretted; and his countenance did not belie the mourning suit he wore.

'How is your missis, Maitland?' asked Mr Mellish anxiously, as the butler opened the door.

'Better than one would expect, sir,' said the old servant, shaking his head. 'She don't give way to tears much, they tell me.'

'I am sorry for it,' said the parson. 'That's a bad sign. Has the doctor been?'

'Mr Ricketts called, sir; but my mistress wouldn't see him.'

'And Miss Christie?'

'Miss Christie is wonderful good, sir; tries to keep up for the sake of her mother; but, O Lord, sir, it's a hard matter for all of us.'

'Now, don't you be a fool, Maitland,' said the parson sharply; 'but take a lesson from your young mistress.—Shew this gentleman into the breakfast-parlour, if there's a fire there, and see about getting a room for him. He will stay here to-night, and probably longer.'

The butler stared.

'It's all right,' said the rector. 'Mr Steen here has come down on the part of Mr Frederick, who is too ill to come in person.'

'Very good, sir. Then he can have Mr Frederick's room, which was prepared for him, by missis' orders, the night before last.'

'That will do, Maitland. You may leave us.—Now, Mr Steen, you will be good enough to stay here, while I go up-stairs and mention your arrival. There are no books, because this was poor Frank's "study," and reading was not his forte. But there is a picture to look at, which is large enough to be seen even by this light. It represents Boleslaus, king of Poland, slaying Stanislaus, Bishop of Cracovia, and his only brother, at the high-altar, while he was celebrating mass. Not a cheerful subject; but Maitland will bring you candles and

something to eat directly, I have no doubt.' And with that he left the room.

There was no doubt in Charles Steen's mind as to who was the painter who had executed this work of art: the large size of the figures; the gorgeous colouring, that seemed to mitigate the gathering gloom, would alone have marked it for his patron's. Nay, as he examined it more intently, there seemed to him a likeness in the truculent monarch's expression, though not in the features, to that worn by Mr Frederick Blissett when displeased—the same sort of similitude which he had observed in the same painter's *Lucius Sylla*. Was it possible that the artist's mind was so subjective as to repeat himself in whatever he did; or was a morbid fancy playing him false in the dim twilight? No. The butler presently came in with lighted candles, closed the shutters, drew the curtains, and made all snug; but the likeness of King Boleslaus to Mr Frederick Blissett remained even more obvious. Was it possible that those vindictive eyes were just a hairbreadth too near together? Did his majesty of Poland squint? If the test of a good portrait, as some say, lies in the eyes following the spectator about the room, that of this royal assassin certainly fulfilled it, for they pursued Charles Steen with such malicious persistence, that at last he drew a chair to the fire, and sat down with his back to them.

With his elbows on his knees, and his head in his hands, he sat plunged in thought, reviewing his scanty yet not uneventful past, till he was suddenly roused by a hand laid upon his shoulder, and in his ear a manly voice, with gentle pathos in it, saying: 'Charles Steen, this is Miss Christie, the niece of Mr Frederick Blissett.'

The young man started up and bowed.

Christie, pale, worn with weeping, and still more with efforts not to weep, attired in some old black garments which she chanced to have by her, made for her long ago, stood by his side, the very impersonation, as it seemed to him, of youth and woe and beauty.

'You are come to a mournful house, sir; but you are welcome.'

'I am grieved, indeed, Miss Blissett, that it is so: a stranger's sympathy is valueless in so sad a case. Let me say, however, that my mission is, if possible, to mitigate a calamity that nothing can cure. Your uncle bade me say'— The look of the young girl was so distraught with wretchedness, that the ambassador's words failed him for very pity. 'Here is the letter he intrusted to me to give you,' was all that he could say.

'Whatever is written, he has, I am sure, chosen a kind messenger,' said she gratefully.

'You had better read it, Christie,' remarked Mr Mellish significantly, 'before taking it up-stairs.'

While she did so, the parson spoke to Steen in a low voice. 'You are going up to see Mrs Blissett. She insists upon it. You must be very patient with her—gentle, of course, you will be—and while performing your duty to him who sends you, do it with discretion.—What do you think, Christie?'

The young girl was turning the note about with her hands, in evident perplexity.

'Do you read it, Mr Mellish, and advise me.'

Even while asking for advice, the expression of her face was singularly discreet and thoughtful: the change that had come over those youthful features within the last eight-and-forty hours, was such as it commonly takes years to effect. Not

only had the buoyancy of the child disappeared for ever, but the bashful timidity, the demure shyness of the maiden, seemed to have been overleaped; a matronly discretion had suddenly lit upon those youthful brows, and settled there. Nor did Christie look even in years nearly so young as when we saw her last.

'I think, Mr Steen had better see your mother, since she seems to desire it, Christie,' said Mr Mellish, returning her the note without any observation.

'Mr Steen has as yet had no refreshment,' said the young lady doubtfully. 'While he takes some, had I not better go to mamma and read the note?'

'I think not, Christie,' was the rector's quiet reply.

'Pray, do not consider me, I beg, Miss Blissett,' said Charles Steen, who, unused to the downs' air, was, in truth, getting well-nigh ravenous.

'I will take my dinner with him when he comes down,' put in Mr Mellish: 'if he appreciates good company, that will more than atone for the delay.'

Though mirth in the house of woe is misplaced, the thing called cheerfulness—at other times rather the reverse of exhilarating—is generally grateful. Mr Mellish was well used to visit the homes of affliction; and, indeed, like his favourite author, he had studied human nature under most aspects. Mr Frederick Blissett's letter had made a no more pleasing impression on him than it had on Christie; but he trusted that its bearer's good looks and gentle manners would prove their own passport with the widow, nevertheless.

'Will you please to follow me, Mr Steen?' said Christie; and she led the way through the hall, with its crossed fox-brushes on the wall, and the large hunting-map, with the poor squire's favourite meets marked in red ink, and up those stairs which were never more to creak beneath his tread.

'This is mamma's room; she is a sad invalid,' said she, in half-apologetic, half-appealing tones, as she ushered him into the boudoir which we have already seen. It was well lit. Mrs Blissett was lying, as before, upon the spring-couch, which was in the daytime a sofa. She was in deep black, and already she wore a widow's cap, which framed a face more pinched and worn than ever. Her eyes were very homes of woe, but shewed no trace of tears.

'You come from Mr Frederick Blissett, sir?' said she, signing to the young man, almost impetuously, to remain where he was.

'I do, madam.'

'Do you know him well?'

'I have only known him a very short time, madam.'

'And yet you are his confidential friend, it seems?'

The voice, though low, was distinct and steady. The fragile hand that held the note, as yet unread, which her daughter had placed in it, trembled not at all. His reception was altogether different from what the youth had expected, but it set him comparatively at ease; and yet he was well aware that beneath this resolute bearing there lay an unutterable wretchedness; nay, he felt dimly conscious that this poor woman regarded him not only as a stranger, who might not intermeddle with her woe, but as an enemy, to whom it were sacrilegious to evince it.

'I am in too humble a position to be Mr Frederick Blissett's friend, madam,' said he modestly. 'I am his companion and assistant only; but being himself unwell, he has chosen me as his agent in this matter. He bade me say, with reference to the cruel calamity—'

Christie touched his arm lightly with her fingers. A spasm seemed to distort her mother's face; but she opened the letter when he ceased, and read it through without a sign of emotion.

'Your patron's illness seems to have been very sudden, sir. A letter from him arrived here but three days since, in which he makes no mention of it.'

'I believe it was sudden, madam. I was not with him at the time you mention; but I can answer for it, of my own personal knowledge, that he was very unwell last night. It was no mere excuse.'

'I did not say it was, sir. He has no cause to make such. He is master here now, to come or stay as he pleases.' The widow's words dropped from her lips as hard and sharp as nails, and the bitterness of gall seemed to lie in her tones, as she added: 'There is not much in this letter, Mr Steen. I conclude you are in this gentleman's confidence. May I ask if you have any orders to communicate to us?'

'Orders, madam? Indeed, if I had such to give, he must have chosen another messenger. I know him, as I have said, but little, yet I am bound to tell you that he again and again begged me to assure you of his wish to serve you; of his desire to grant any request of yours.'

Christie stooped down, and whispered something into her mother's ear.

'Forgive me, Mr Steen,' said the widow in a changed voice: 'forgive a broken-hearted crippled creature, whom God has seen good to deprive of her sole stay and comfort—' Yes,' added she in reply to her daughter's glance of loving remonstrance, 'so it seems, my Christie, darling—I see, sir, I have wronged you.'

'God help you, madam, and comfort you,' said the young man earnestly. 'I, who have no friend in all the world, may, for myself, say so much as that, since I am forbidden to speak for another. But I do trust you will suffer Mr Blissett to be of some service—that you will permit me to name to him some one thing at least which it may lie in his power to do.'

'He has already placed us under an obligation, by sending in his place a young gentleman with so good a heart,' said the widow gravely.

'I can scarcely write him that, dear madam,' persisted Steen.

'Ah, yes, you must write him something—true.' The widow's features seemed to stiffen into stone; then she looked at her daughter, and they relaxed again. 'For myself, sir, I need nothing; I have nothing to ask.'

'Forgive me, dear madam, if I say that it was for your sake—for you especially—that Mr Blissett seemed anxious to be of service. He thought, probably, that his readiness to do his best for your daughter—his own flesh and blood—might be taken for granted.'

'He wished to please me, did he? Me?' said the widow slowly. 'Well, that lies in his power. It is very simple. He asks there—she pointed to the letter, which she had let fall on the couch beside her as soon as read—a question about the fu—the day'—

'He does, madam,' interrupted Steen, seeing that the poor lady scarcely could speak.

'Tell him'—her voice became here once more clear again, and as she proceeded, hard even to harshness—'tell Mr Frederick Blissett, that the only favour his sister-in-law has to ask of him for herself is this—that he will *not* come to the funeral of his dead brother.'

'That, since my uncle is so far from well,' put in Christie gently, 'dear mamma means that we would not wish him to take the journey; but that we thank him for his offer to do so, and for the other kind expressions in his note.'

'Tell him what you will, sir,' continued the widow, feebly endeavouring to raise herself on the couch, 'so long as you tell him not to come. Let no—'

Christie motioned with her hand that Steen should leave the room; but before he could obey her, he caught, in excited accents, the words: 'Let no false alloy mingle with our woe—no hypocrite's tears'—

'You must forget this, Mr Steen,' whispered Christie with earnestness, as they stood together outside the door.

'I remember nothing, Miss Blissett,' returned the young man respectfully, 'except that your poor mother is sore afflicted both in body and mind.'

AMONG THE MOSCOVITES.

Most people know a good deal about St Petersburg; but the ancient capital of the newest of European empires is a visionary place still, with vague traditions clinging to it of invasion by the Tartar hordes, of determined strife with the trained warriors of Poland and the horsemen of the Don. A brave old history, which, however, pales before the memory of the dearly purchased, fatal victory of Napoleon, and the famous deed of the Muscovites, in 1812. This it is which gives the old capital in the far east of Europe deep interest for us, people of the West—these are the grand, savage memories which gather around the Kremlin.* Looking upon the city as it stands to-day, with many strange features, 'you cannot,' says Mr Lowth, 'separate yourself from that grand and tragic event. The grandeur of the enterprise, the amazing proportions of the undertaking, the consummate skill of the arrangement, the energy of the conduct of the plan, the sublimity of the defence, the tragic failure, and the heroism under ruin—all these are the features of the picture to which Moscow owes the renown and the glory stamped upon the modern mind.'

From a succession of eminences of no great height, called the Sparrow Hills, on the western side of the city, the traveller can look over the whole of Moscow, spread out before him like a map. Small wooden buildings stud these hills, frequented by parties of pleasure, who come thither to drink the universal tea, and to look out of the verandas over their sacred and glittering Moscow.

* *Around the Kremlin, or Pictures of Life in Moscow.*
By G. T. Lowth, Esq., author of *The Wanderer in Arabia,*
&c. London: Hurst and Blackett.

Truly, a wonderful and beautiful city, with its numerous hills, its endless pinnacles and cupolas, its countless towers, its brightly coloured houses, and the universal gardens, which form its chief beauty and strangeness to the eye accustomed to the dingy, tasteless, formal, dull streets of most other capitals, and especially of London. When, on the 15th September 1812, the French army came up the slope from the west to the Sparrow Hills, they saw the end and the apparent reward of all their labours lying at their feet. No more beautiful city exists upon the earth than that which lay before Napoleon. Here is Mr Lowth's sketch of what the great conqueror, in the hour of his greatest triumph, on the verge of the beginning of his doom, saw from his post amid his shouting, exultant troops. 'The diameter of the city from north to south is about six miles, and the whole of this extent, without a break, was under his eye; and the possession of such a city, the capital of a great people, filled, as he could see, with almost unnumbered churches, and, as he would naturally suppose, with merchandise of the East and West, and private possessions of the great Russian bankers and nobles, would appear to him to be a prize of almost incalculable wealth in money and money's worth, as well as a diadem of glory to France. . . At about a mile distant from the northern gate, at the edge of the great military plain, stands the palace of Peterhoff, to which Napoleon had gone after viewing the city from the Sparrow Hills, and where he remained for two days in vain expectation of the authorities of Moscow coming out to him, as usual in similar circumstances, with the keys of the town—a deputation of the conquered to the victor, to beg for clemency. No deputation came; and with angry words upon his lips, and sad presents of coming evil in his heart, he entered the Kremlin, and there only he learned, by the fire bursting out, almost simultaneously in many quarters, even in the Kremlin itself, under what totally new and savage circumstances his invasion was to be met by a united, a devoted, and an infuriated nation.' As in fancy the traveller shares his first sight of Moscow with the triumphant army of France, so he is forced, before he can 'go down the hill into the lovely and laughing city,' to follow them in that awful retreat, when the devastated city was behind them, the cry of vengeance everywhere around them; the maddened hosts on every side destroying the destroyer at every step with unsatisfied rage, until worse came upon the doomed victims, worse than the Russian swords—the icy hand of winter; and then regiments disbanded and dispersed to meet no more, whole divisions, in exhaustion and despair, surrendered themselves to their conquerors, with all their spoil—and Moscow was avenged.

In the centre of the circuit of twenty miles covered by the ancient capital, is the Kremlin Hill, the central object, in every sense; a broad open space around the walls, whose sacred precincts no buildings approach. Equally exclusive, shut in by its battlemented wall, and encircled by a broad

boulevard, is the Kitai Gorod, or Chinese Town, which must make the traveller strongly realise the orientalism of the place. The regularity of the great city in one respect—for the large streets radiate evenly to the barriers, and are intersected by other boulevards, running in a circular direction, and laid out with trees and walks, the plan for admitting light and air being perfect—is contradicted by its beautifully picturesque eccentricity in another. Here are no large streets of unvaryingly large houses, no small streets of mean ones. Every Russian house is a cottage, on a large or small scale, according to the rank and affluence of the owner. As a rule, the whole building is of wood, and painted in brilliant colours, and the cottage of the peasant in the village resembles in its essential features the house of the noble. These noble-cottages and peasant-cottages form the greater part of Moscow, some of the public buildings only being one-story houses, and built of brick. From the centre of the city, formed by the Kremlin and the Kitai Gorod, a certain number of broad thoroughfares, widening as they approach the barriers, radiate. The houses are very low, the streets very broad, and perpetual brightness pervades the city. Here is a little bit of description, which must surely be unique in the records of cities all over the world. 'When you turn out of any one of the large thoroughfares into a cross-street, you find yourself at once among village-cottages. These crossways, which form a net-work in the large spaces between one great thoroughfare and another, are the prettiest and most retired little country retreats one can imagine. They are quite unique in their repose and neatness, and in the entire absence of the noise and turmoil of the great city. Let us walk from the Palanka Square, in the centre of everything, to the post-office, half a mile off, a large white building, standing far back, in a fine courtyard, seventy or eighty yards in length, and enclosed by a high iron railing with gilded spear-points. A few yards further on, we turn down what might be a lane in a country village. On either hand are small cottages, the windows looking on the street; but there is no doorway! How strange such a description sounds to the frequenter of Cheapside, or the Rue St Honoré, or Princes Street, or the Trongate. To each of these cottages is a large gateway, opening into a green and grassy court and garden. As we walk by, the gate being half open, perhaps, we look in and witness a quiet scene of the country. There are trees, two or three small laburnums or acacias, and a flower-bed, and cocks and hens are walking about on the grass-plot; there is perhaps a cow, and the stable and coach-house, and a man is pushing the rude tarantaise into the coach-house. The women are seated on the veranda, or on the steps leading down into the garden, and the children are at play. It is a sunny spot, fresh, green, bright, and quiet, as if fifty miles from Moscow. . . . Some of those quiet lanes are within a stone's throw of the Grand Opera-house, and the Kitai Gorod, quite in the centre of the town, and the cottages occupied by families of the humbler class.'

It must feel strangely to lean over a low paling by the side of a rustic lane, on a hillside, and look over hundreds of gardens, crowded with brilliant-hued flowers, and rich graceful trees; at scores of churches, each with its fine cupolas, green or gilded; over myriads of cottage-houses, all as fresh and bright, owing to the clear atmosphere

and the total absence of smoke, as if Moscow had just had all its roofs, walls, and chimneys newly painted; and, continuing your early morning ramble, to meet a solitary cow, walking in brisk and purpose-like manner, without any one to look after her, through one of the main streets. This spectacle Mr Lowth beheld, and then another, and another cow, each alone, each self-possessed, and evidently thoroughly aware of whither she was going, and why. This is the explanation. Vast numbers of cows are among the possessions of the dwellers in the large and small houses in the city. During the summer-time, when there is pasture, the first thing to be done in all these dwellings is to let out the cow; then the servant may go to bed again; and the emancipated animal sets off alone, by certain streets, towards a certain barrier. Other cows join her, and by the time they all arrive near the barrier, they are a considerable body. Here they find a man blowing a horn, whose business it is to conduct them to some pasture outside the town, to take care of them during the day, to collect them by his horn in the afternoon, and to bring them back to the barrier at a given time. When he has done this, his business is over. Each cow knows her way home, and finds it unmolested up to the very heart of the city, the Kremlin; and thus every family insures a supply of new milk by a simple and convenient method. If any cows are occasionally stolen *in transitu*, and converted into beef, the circumstance does not transpire, and the following anecdote looks as if it did not happen. 'One afternoon,' says Mr Lowth, 'I was loitering about the Palanka Square, just outside the Kitai gates, when through one of the Kitai gates, and from among the crowd of passengers, came a solitary cow. As she passed near me, I remarked her fine form, full eye, and glossy neck. There was no one with her to take care of her. I remarked this to a Swiss, who was my companion. "Is she quite alone?" I said. "Of course," he replied: "she knows her way home." "Well, but she has just come through the Kitai, at its very busiest time, when its streets are crowded with carts and people: would not boys interrupt her?" My thoughts went off to what our London *gamin* would do under similar circumstances. "There is no man or boy in all Moscow would venture to touch or interfere with that cow," said the Swiss; "it would be as much as his life is worth. At any hour of the day, she is safe everywhere; and you see everybody gets out of her way to let her get home. Every one is interested in every cow carrying her milk home to the family, and so she is under the protection of every one." This beautiful animal came from Southern Russia. Everything exceptionally good or beautiful comes from Southern Russia, according to the Muscovites, for they, too, have the dream of all peoples, of the beautiful unknown country, which is very far off, and where everything is faultless.'

The grand old medieval fortress of the Kremlin, with its fine simple walls, and its towers, many and multiform, once strong against Cossack lances and Polish spears, but powerless against cannon, is a nobly picturesque centre for so beautiful a city. The Nicholsky Gate is said to be that through which the French army marched out of Moscow. Above it rises a lofty tower in successive stories of stone, a fine structure. The arch is pointed Gothic, and above its crown is a picture of St Nicholas of

Mojaisk, in a gilt frame; beneath it is an inscription which says that Napoleon, on leaving Moscow, tried to blow up this gateway and tower, but that the saint protected and saved it. So no Russian, from Alexander the Czar to the poorest peasant, passes in or out of that arch without uncovering to the picture, and most persons cross themselves three times and say a prayer. The strangest sight in that city of strange sights is to be seen by the loiterer near the Tversky Gate, on whose northern front stands the Chapel of the Iberian Mother. Mr Lowth describes it as a building not more than twelve feet square, plain, unpretending, like an English turnpike-house. From the centre runs out a stone platform, twenty feet long, whence five steps descend to the street. The interior is highly decorated; there is space inside the broad entrance-door for a few persons, and at the back of it, over the altar, is the famous picture of the Iberian Mother. Beside it always stand one or two Greek priests. The painting is Byzantine, and was brought here from Mount Athos, in the reign of the Czar Alexia. It is regarded with extraordinary veneration, and the emperor sets the example, by paying the 'Mother' the most profound respect. He always goes to the Kremlin by her gate, though it is the longest way, and always gets out of his carriage, kneels, uncovered, before the picture. This never-omitted action 'forms a bond of attachment between the czar and the Russian mind of far deeper meaning and influence than any common tie of men's political connection or liking.' No more characteristic spectacle can be witnessed in the ancient Russian capital than this ever-recurring salutation and prayer, when, hour after hour, all day long, all sorts and conditions of men come streaming through the arch, and, however various their ranks, or their occupations, or their ages, one sentiment unites them—one unbounded, unclouded faith animates them. Passing through the sacred arch, on the right is the Arsenal, where the most impressive, most touching, most suggestive object in Moscow—there are few more so in the world—is to be seen. 'An enormous number of cannon are piled in compartments in an artistic way on a low raised platform in front of the whole length of the Arsenal. There are large guns, small guns, plain, ornamented, iron guns, brass guns. There are hundreds and hundreds—it is said twelve hundred is the number. These are the trophies of the famous campaign of 1812. Ker Porter and Segur both agree in this—though they differ in so many other points—that the French did not carry one single gun over the Niemen on their quitting Russia—not one. Except those guns which were blown to pieces purposely on the retreat, or thrown into rivers and lost, here are all of that mighty armament which the emperor took with him on that fatal expedition. You cannot help regarding these silent witnesses of that terrible punishment of overvaulting ambition, without a certain degree of deep sympathy and pain. Many of these guns were ornamented with devices, flowers, and figures, and many bore mottoes.' On a copper-plate in the wall of the building is an inscription: 'Canons pris aux ennemis en 1812, sur le territoire Russe, par la victorieuse armée, et la brave et fidèle nation Russe.' Strange, that the record of Russian triumph should be in the language of the invader! This proud trophy, for which the Russians are indebted as much to their

climate as to their bravery and patriotism, is a fitting adjunct to the splendid imperial residence; and the whole mass of building, including many churches, convents, and towers, and the old palace of the czars, is unrivalled for beauty and position. Down in the Kitai Gorod is the old dwelling-house of the Romanoff family, still maintained by each succeeding czar in all its original condition—a diminutive, pretty, quaint building. Within the Kremlin is the little old palace of the Ruriks, in a back-court, painted inside and out from top to bottom—a bright and fanciful specimen of the taste of the olden time. From the upper terrace, Napoleon looked over his conquest—his conquest in vain—burning in defiance. A portion of the building is employed even now on some very great state occasions, 'used,' says Mr Lowth, 'in public as a kind of social duty to the memory of the old Muscovite czars—a usage which is dear to the people, appeals to all their traditional memories of the sacred past, and touches their natural pride in and affection for their emperors; links the present with the ancient days; and preserves, as a living fire, the superstitious reverence of this devotional, and almost fanatical people to their ruler.'

The famous Foundling Hospital is of immense extent, and in all respects a model institution, the description of which is not to be read without a sigh at the thought of the contrast between the large-minded charity and good sense which finds practical expression in such a contrast to the hideous records of infanticide, street-Arabism, and hopeless poverty and crime, which are multiplying about us in England. Since the traveller is no longer obliged to carry his own bedding about with him, locomotion in Russia has become easy and pleasant, and the gentleness and civility of the people make it agreeable to associate with them. All public authorities are notoriously venal, and the police are useless and dishonest, every one in every kind of office being underpaid, and having to secure the indispensable 'margin' by taking bribes and peculation; but, on the whole, life is a peaceful process in Moscow, and the established trade in robbery is pretty openly carried on among the people themselves, and not very perilous to the stranger within the gates. 'Thieves' Market,' where stolen clothes are openly sold, is a peculiar institution, concerning which Mr Lowth asked what the police, who stand about the place where it is held, in their uniforms, do, and was answered that they do nothing, or 'only what suits them.' We have heard a good deal about Russian officials and Russian police, but Mr Lowth excels in his way of putting the case. 'The business of the police,' he says, 'is to discover the thieves, but then their next business is to make all the money they can for themselves. They are badly paid by the government, and when they have discovered the thief, they keep the discovery close. The government has already paid them their share of the premium, but if the robber will pay something handsome, more than the government, then the interest of the police is on the side of the higher premium—the robber. The robbers are a mine of wealth to them. This is a very curious state of things in this beautiful and highly civilised city.' The market is held daily, and the people who sell are not the actual thieves, but the purchasers at low prices of the stolen goods.

The Muscovites are intensely fond of money; but they do not seem to have many bad faults.

A mild, patient, industrious race, not cruel in any way, and with much love of home, and fidelity to family ties—the lower orders, as usual, offering the best and most wholesome types of character. They are very polite and considerate in their manners, and cheerful, fond of the simple outdoor gatherings and cheap amusements which are provided plentifully for them. In the glorious summer weather, the people almost live out of doors. It is remarkable that almost all the children of the Russian upper class are delicate and fragile. Mr Lowth was told that they are, as a rule, brought up in close and heated apartments during the long winters; and in the summer, they have no games or out-of-door amusements to attract them into the air, and keep them there in healthful exercise; they are not taught to ride ponies, and sporting is not a habit among Russians—and thus the boys grow up as house-plants, weakly. As young men, they lead an indoor, indolent life, gambling and eating forming much of their occupation; while reading English and French books, and dressing, form the principal part of that of the younger women. ‘It is not, therefore, difficult to understand,’ says Mr Lowth, ‘what was declared to me one day by a party of Russian gentlemen, as a thing to be deplored, that anything more vicious and more thoroughly profigate than the young Russians, sons of the rich and noble families, it would be impossible to find in any country calling itself civilised.’

With the abolition of serfdom, a change has set in, pervading the whole of society in Russia. Formerly, no noble of the higher class put his sons into anything but the army; but now, the nobles find it necessary to have their much-curtailed estates better looked after. The consequence is, that some of the principal nobles in the country are educating one of their sons, not for the army, as heretofore, but to be an agent over the family estates. Mr Lowth heard the great measure which has signalled the reign of Alexander widely discussed; and it was agreed on all hands that though the emperor’s act was not a popular one among the nobles, many of them acknowledge it to be a very useful measure for the country; and the people, as a mass, are enthusiastic about it, and declare that now, for the first time, there is a Russian people. Gambling, in particular, had reached a frightful height among the Russian nobility. They played away a monstrous sum in Moscow in the winter; and when they had lost heavily, and sent down to their estates to their agents for more—the agents were very often their own serfs, and lent them their own money. ‘Now,’ says Mr Lowth, ‘the nobles cannot any longer play in this way, and so the commercial men in Moscow are taking their places. These men play even more heavily than the nobles did; at the club, you may see a thousand roubles on a card. However, these men, by their losses, do not do so much mischief as the nobles did. When the millionaires and others lose their money, it goes to any other millowner, and the mill goes on; but if a noble damaged his estates, his people suffered, his land, his villages, his tradesmen, his children—every one. Now the nobles are becoming more sensible; and the next generation will be sensible men.’ It is to be hoped so; but their physical training, as described by Mr Lowth, does not look like it. He is a deeply appreciative and sympathetic writer, and the most candid, large-minded,

and cosmopolitan of travellers; he makes his readers long to tread the ground he has trodden, and to partake of his spirit as well as of his experiences, and draws us nearer than any English writer has yet done to a feeling of communion and fellowship with distant, alien, half-inimical, semi-oriental, Holy Russia.

THE PRETTY BUTCHERESS.

IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER IV.

NELLY had been rightly informed as to the whereabouts of the Rev. Mr Renshaw. He had left home immediately after dinner to pay a visit to Mr Straddle, cab-driver, who lived on the first floor of No. 6 Stamford Court, Warrington Street. Let us go back a couple of hours, and stand by Mr Renshaw as he takes hold of and pulls twice (such is the etiquette of Stamford Court) the second from the bottom of about six brass knobs, which form the useful as well as ornamental additions to the hither ends of the wires which communicate with the bells which summon the inmates of No. 6. The Rev. Mr Renshaw is about thirty, stands about five feet nine, is strongly built, wears black whiskers, beard, and moustaches, and has remarkably bright black eyes. His dress, if it were not for his white tie, would not mark his profession; he has on dark gray trousers, and such a black frock-coat and black cloth waistcoat as might be worn by a gentleman of any or no profession. There is in his appearance neither starch nor unctuous; and his thick-soled boots, his oaken stick, and gloveless hands seem to betoken that he is given to pedestrian exercise. His expression is a little stern; but there comes into his eyes now and then a twinkle that tells both of humour and of kindness. So such a man having been kept waiting the period which is fashionable in Stamford Court, the door was at length opened by our old friend, Mrs Straddle, who exclaimed: ‘Lor, Mr Renshaw, sir, and me not cleaned myself!’

‘How are you, Mrs Straddle?’ asked Renshaw, walking into the passage; ‘and how is your husband to-night?’

‘Well, sir, he seem a little comfortable, thank ee kindly. Will ye step up, sir, please? though we’re all of a muck.’

‘Certainly, I will, if I may. I want to have a chat with Straddle.’

And without more ceremony, the Rev. Mr Renshaw followed Mrs Straddle up-stairs and into a room, the atmosphere of which was not such as Miss Florence Nightingale would have recommended an invalid to breathe. If there were not ‘seventy-five different stinks, all well defined,’ such as Coleridge discovered in Cologne, allowance should be made for the size of the room compared with the city. What could be done in the odiferous line in so small a place, had been done; and the most prevalent odours just now were those which proceeded from damp linen hanging upon cords all over the room to dry, and from the fumes

of tobacco. The latter was rather agreeable than otherwise ; for the tobacco which the invalid, as he sat, wrapped in flannel, near the fire, was smoking was really good, as the Rev. Mr Renshaw at once discovered and announced, saying : 'Ah ! Straddle, how are you ? That's uncommonly good tobacco you are smoking ; I should like a pipe of it.'

'That you shall have, sir.—Missus, get a pipe for Muster Renshaw. Excuse me gettin' up, sir ; I'm that bad with the rheumatics'—

'Don't say a word of excuse, Straddle : I'm sorry to see you suffering so much ; but I'm glad you can enjoy your pipe.'

'Yes, sir, thank'ee, I find a whiff o' baccy does me as much good as anything. Pray, light up, sir.' 'I never—tasted—better—stuff than this,' said Renshaw between his first few puffs. 'Where do you get it ?'

'Ah !' answered Straddle, with a sigh, a nod, and a knowing look, 'I couldn't afford to git such baccy as this, sir ; it's some I've ad by me ever so long, and it was give to me by a wonderful nice gent by the name o' Fantom.'

'Fantom ! What ! George Fantom ?' cried Renshaw.

'I dun know what his Christun name may be, sir ; Fantom, esquire, we call 'im.'

'What sort of a man is he ?'

'Well, I should say about a twelve-stone man, sir, or not so much—may be he'd ride twelve stone and a half'—

'Ah !' interrupted Renshaw laughing ; 'but is he fair or dark ?'

'Fair ! I'll warrant him as fair a gentleman as ever walked : nothing dark about 'im, sir.'

'I mean, what colour is his hair ?'

'Well, sir, I wouldn't say a word agen a nice gentleman like 'im ; but speakin' to you as a parson, sir, as must 'ave the truth, I should say it was reddish ; not carrots, you know, sir, but a little reddish.'

'Does he live in the Temple ?'

'Ay, that he do, sir.'

'Then it must be George Fantom, and I know him very well indeed.'

'Do you, now, sir ? Well, I am glad o' that,' said Straddle chuckling.

'But how did you make his acquaintance ?'

Straddle at this question was seized with a fit of laughing, which caused him in his rheumatical condition no small pain, and brought down upon him a remonstrance from Mrs Straddle, who remarked, with the testiness of affection : 'Drat you, Straddle, ain't your bile and rheumatics enough, without makin' em wuss ? I b'lieve you'd laugh at some things if you was on your dyin' bed, or if you was as bad with biles as the gentleman in the Bible, what scraped hisself with a oyster-shell or summutter.'

Straddle, however, having recovered himself both from his laughter and his pain, said : 'It was a rummy way, sir, of makin' friends—I runned over 'im.'

'Oh ! it was you, was it ?' asked Renshaw. 'I knew he had been run over by a cab, but I didn't know you did it.'

'Yes, sir, and this is 'ow it were. I took up a fare at Waterloo Station to set down at Kensin'ton. I'd got a pretty fairish trot on as we come to the turnin' into the Strand, when I see a gent a-swingin' slowly along over the crossin' with 'is 'ands in 'is pockets, as easy as if he was in a flower-

garden. I 'oller'd out : "Hi !—hi !—hi-i-i !" three or four times, makin' sure he'd cut it, to git out o' the way ; but he didn't take no more notice than if I'd a bin a coster cryin' greens ; and afore I cud pull up, the near wheel caught 'im in the quarters, and sent 'im a-spinnin' on to the kerb a good un. He was terrible shook, and 'ad the bark took off 'is chin, and 'is legs and his nose went a-bleedin' like a sheep's in a butcher's shop. In course, I stopped ; and my fare, which were a gentleman and no mistake, he got out, and says : "It warn't your fault, kebby ; and 'ere's my card, if you should want me to speak up for you afore the beak ;" and he put Muster Fantom, as was uncommon groggy, into my keb, and got Muster Fantom to say where he was to be druv to, and got in with 'im ; and I druv 'em both to the Temple. Muster Fantom was queer still when we got 'im 'ome ; but when I says : "I 'ope you won't be 'ard on me, sir ; I don't think as it were my fault ; I kep' a-'ollerin' out : Hi ! sir," he laughed a little faintish, and, says he : "'ow the devil,' he says (I beg pardon, Muster Renshaw, but that's what he said)—"'ow the devil,' he says, 'should I know you was a-speakin' to me ? My name isn't 'Hi,' he says ; my name's Fantom.' Well, I give him my ticket, and he says he can't speak to me no more jest then, but tells me to call on 'im next mornin' ; and I druv off with the fare what give me 'is card to Kensin'ton. Next mornin', I calls on Muster Fantom, and finds him pretty comfortable, barrin' a black eye, and he says : 'Well, three-thousand-and-seventeen' (the number o' my ticket, sir), "I shan't 'ave you transported this time, for, to tell you the truth, I b'lieve it were my fault." He were smokin' a pipe, and he ast me to 'ave one, and I did ; and when I said what fust-class baccy it were, he give me a great packet of it ; and he ast me about keb-drivin' and all that ; and I told him what 'ard times it were, and I told 'im about the missus and the two children ; and when I were a-goin', he says : "Look 'ere ; you must be paid for loss of time," and he gives me five shillin's. Oh ! he's a rare good sort is Muster Fantom.'

'You are right there, Straddle,' said Renshaw earnestly.

'And when he want a keb, sir, he always look out for me and 'ave mine, if he can ; and he always 'ave 'is paper o' my little Billy, as is in the newspaperin' line out o' doors in Fleet Street ; and he often 'ave 'is boots cleaned by my little Jimmy, as is in the boot-cleanin'. And Jimmy—he ain't one o' them lot dressed up in all sorts o' colours, and numbered like convic's, but independent like—Jimmy telled me as 'ow he were a-cleanin' Muster Fantom's boots one day, and a sleek chap in a white tie (makin'-believe he were a parson, I dessay) come up and says to Muster Fantom : "Parding me, sir ; you'd be a-doin' a real service to a good cause if you'd employ the S'ciety's boys, and not them outsiders ;" and Muster Fantom says : "Parding me, sir ; but I only know o' one S'ciety, and that's mankind ; and I objec' to makin' guys o' 'uman bein's, and ticketin' 'em like articles in a shop-winder ; and what's more, I don't see what right you 'ave to interfere with a lad as tries to get a 'onest livin', or with me ;" and the sleek chap says : "No offence, sir, I 'ope ;" and Muster Fantom (a-workin' 'isself up, Jimmy says, like people as acts a play) shouts out quite fierce : "Ay, but there is, and much offence too ;" and the sleek chap says : "Oh !" and 'ooks it.'

'I am not sure that Mr Fantom is quite right there,' said Renshaw.—'But I wanted to talk to you about other matters, Straddle. You find you have no difficulty with those tickets for coals and things?'

'No, sir, thank'ee. The missus says some o' the folks is a little nasty sometimes about our not goin' to church.'

'Ah!' said Renshaw seriously, 'I wish you would go to church; but I don't think that ought to make any difference with respect to the tickets, or else they might look like a bribe.'

'I can't go now, sir,' replied Straddle doggedly.

'Certainly not,' observed Renshaw smiling.

'And then,' continued Straddle in a grumbling tone, 'when I ain't laid up, I'm at work, and all my masters works kebs of a Sunday.'

'Still, your wife and children might go,' rejoined Renshaw, looking at Mrs Straddle.

'Me, sir!' exclaimed Mrs Straddle in a shrill tone. 'Well, I've bin, sir; and I find, when I go in the mornin', I'm a-thinkin' all the time whether they won't spile the dinner at the bake-us; and when I go in the arternoon, I can't keep my eyes open; and of a evenin', the rector allus preach, and he make me dream so frightful, I can't arldy do a bit o' washin' the next day. As for the children, they're that frightened o' the beadle, you can't get 'em to go alone; but they go to Sunday school reg'lar, and Miss Ellen (that's Miss Brentwood) have taught 'em their dooty towards God and their dooty towards their neighbour without missing a word.'

'If they never miss a word of these,' said Renshaw solemnly, and a little ironically, 'they will not come to any harm.—Do you read that Bible I gave you, Straddle?'

'No, sir,' answered Straddle, with a shuffle, and in a surly tone; 'can't say as I do, sir; I never were fond o' readin' myself. The missus, she take a spell at it sometimes: she give me and the children the story o' the gentleman she were a-talkin' of jest now as were so bad in the boils: it seemed suitable to my case. But some'ow it didn't appear to me that he were so over and above patient; he didn't cuss and swear exactly, but he throwed 'isself under the grate, and cussed the day he were born, and went on pretty stiff at 'is friends.'

Renshaw smiled, and said: 'Patient is used of a man at a hospital who does nothing but complain all day—isn't it?'

'Why, yes, sir,' answered Straddle, 'and that allus seemed odd to me too. Patient! says I; why, 'e's a-bellerin' like a bull.'

'Words have more than one meaning sometimes,' rejoined Renshaw; 'that is the reason, very often, why people get wrong ideas'—

Here Straddle, considering himself found fault with, burst out saying: 'It's unreasonable what the public thinks o' keb-drivers. Keb-drivers, 'cordin' to them, is cheats, liars, and drunkards. I've got a awful red face, I know, but if it's any kind o' drink it's tea, such as this 'ere as I'm a-drinkin' now. I don't take a drop o' sperrits not once a week when I'm in work. It's my constituooshun and weather, that's what it is, the doctor says, make my face such a objec'. I know once, when I were workin' night-keb, and it were drefful cold weather, and I 'adn't took a fare since I come out, and I 'adn't 'ad anything t' eat, I jest took a little drop o' rum; and what wi' that and bein' numb o' cold, I fell asleep, and I tumbled off my keb; and plice swore

I were drunk, cos I smelt o' rum, and the beak very nigh tuk away my licence. And then, when you ain't got change, a young swell 'll say: "Come, kebby, I'll toss yer whether I give yer 'alf-a-crown or nothin'!" and me with a wife and family: and then they're nasty 'cos I won't toss. And the public b'lieves all keb-drivers is fightin'-men, and young fellers up to their larks 'll want yer to go fust tip on the nose for a shillin'. I'm sure I never told a lie knowin'ly about my fare in my life, and many's the time I've proved the fare to be wrong 'isself. And if yer do go to church, people breaks up away from yer (cos o' yer clo'es) as if you 'ad the cholery; and the parson sends yer to the bottomless pit, and it's more than flesh and blood can bear—it is, indeed, Muster Renshaw.'

Renshaw listened attentively, without attempting any interruption, and was just going to reply, when he was startled by a violent ringing at the Straddles' bell, which hung just over his head. Mrs Straddle dashed down to the door, returned almost immediately, and said breathlessly to Renshaw: 'Please, sir, there's Miss Ellen—Miss Brentwood and a gent wants to speak to you pernickler, and they won't come up.'

Renshaw wished Straddle good-night, hurried down, followed by Mrs Straddle, and cried: 'Why, Fantom! whatever is the meaning of this?—I beg your pardon, Miss Brentwood; how do you do? Can I be of any service to you?'

Fantom said quickly: 'I'll explain another time; but pray, go at once with Miss Brentwood: she will tell you on the way why we have come here for you.'

Renshaw offered Nelly his arm as if she had been a lady of station, and prepared to go away with her, just stopping to say to Fantom: 'Go upstairs with my friend Mrs Straddle, and she will shew you an old acquaintance of yours.'

Mrs Straddle dropped Fantom a courtesy, and said: 'If so be as you're Fantom, esquire, from the Temple, why, God bless you, sir; and my old man, as is ill up-stairs, would be jest glad to see you; I b'lieve it'd uv very nigh cure 'im.'

'I'm Fantom of the Temple, certainly,' replied Fantom laughing; 'and I will go up with pleasure; but I'm no doctor, and I never worked a cure yet. Shew me the way; that's all.'

Fantom followed Mrs Straddle, who threw open her room-door, saying: 'Straddle, my man, 'ere's Fantom, esquire, come to see yer.'

Straddle made a desperate effort to jump out of his chair, but his rheumatism was too much for him, and he sank back with an exclamation of pain as Fantom, whose eyes were widened with surprise, shouted: 'What! three-thousand-and-seventeen! Why, what's the matter? Has somebody been running over you?'

'Servant, sir, servant, chuckled Straddle, pulling his front hair, and looking as pleased as a child at a pantomime. 'No, sir; I answers to the name o' Hi! sir. But do 'ee sit down, sir; Muster Renshaw didn't mind sittin' on that cheer.'

'Of course, I will sit down,' said Fantom, proceeding to do so; 'and what's more, I will take a pipe of your tobacco, if you'll give me one.'

'Yourn, sir, yourn,' rejoined Straddle joyously; 'it's yourn; and Muster Renshaw have been a-smokin' of it and enjoyin' of it in that there pipe.'

'Then I shall take his pipe,' said Fantom; 'I like a pipe that has been smoked. But you can't

be much of a smoker if you have any of that tobacco left still.'

'Ah, sir,' replied Straddle, 'I kep' it laid by for Sundays when I were well, and I smoke it now I'm ailin' as a sort of treat.'

So Fantom sat and smoked, and pumped out the story of Straddle's sufferings, and Mrs Straddle's hardships, until Billy and Jimmy came in for the night, when he found it advisable, what with the atmosphere and the restraint his presence evidently was upon the two boys, to retire. He had, however, managed to make Mrs Straddle's heart a little lighter by enggaging her at a trifle more than the usual terms in the place of his drunken laundress; for Mrs Straddle found she could 'do for' him as well as perform her work at the laundry when she 'washed.' It was only the washing of her own household which was done at home, and which was not extensive, as could be guessed from the scanty supply of linen which hung drying on the cords in the room.

CHAPTER V.

Nelly, in a very few words, told Renshaw all that was necessary to account for her having Fantom as an escort, and why she had sought out Renshaw even in the abode of the Straddles, saying with a sob: 'I knew, sir, you would forgive me; poor little Bob was so anxious to see you.'

'I should not easily have forgiven you,' rejoined Renshaw, greatly moved, 'if you had not sought me out, or sent for me, wherever I was. Poor little fellow! does he suffer much?'

'No, sir; not at all: the doctor told us he would most likely feel no more pain; but that he could not last until morning.'

'And does the little man know his end is so near?'

'Yes, sir; he begged the doctor to tell him; and when he had been told, he lay quite still and silent for some minutes, with his eyes closed, and then he opened them again, looking more bright and happy than I ever saw him, and said in a whisper: "They've prepared a place for me."

Here poor Nelly broke down again; and no more was said until they arrived at Nelly's home. They were admitted by the private door, and went straight up-stairs to such a room as no one would have dreamed of finding in Eastminster Road. It was lofty, and had two windows, each reaching to within a foot and a half of the floor, so that as much light as possible was thrown into the room. Up the sides and along the top of each window, creepers had been trained to grow on the outside, and each window-sill had its box of fresh-looking flowers. The window-hangings were of tasteful stuff, and tastefully hung; and in the space between the two windows was a very elegant piano. Two cages, in each of which there was a singing-bird, hung, one from the top of each window; on a beautifully covered table stood a large aquarium, surrounded by minor ornaments, in the form of vases, churches which could be lit up at night by candles placed inside them, and similar things, such as boys delight in; by photograph albums, and by books; a few easy-chairs were set here and there; a luxurious-looking couch was placed against one of the walls, at right angles to the wall in which the windows were; and a thick carpet deadened the sound of the heaviest footfall. In an alcove opposite the windows, was a little iron bedstead;

and a door close by the head of the bedstead opened into a little scantily furnished room, where Nelly slept, to be near her brother.

On the iron bedstead, unencumbered by curtains, was a water-bed, and on the water-bed lay, covered up to the chest by the whitest and softest of sheets and counterpane, a little boy about twelve years old. His face was lovely with the light just dawning upon him from another world; but it was pinched withal, and deadly pale. His little hands, white as alabaster, and cruelly thin, were playing idly with the pattern worked on the counterpane; and he every now and then cast an eager glance towards the door near the foot of his bed. On one side of his pillow sat his father, and on the other his mother; but no sound was heard except when either father or mother asked him if he wanted anything, and then he merely shook his head with a grateful smile. Suddenly, the door he had been watching was gently opened, and he gave a sigh of relief and pleasure as he saw Nelly enter with Mr Renshaw. A silent greeting passed between Renshaw and the elder Brentwoods, who made way for him and Nelly near the pillow. The little thin white hands were soon round Nelly's neck, as she stooped down, and a sweet low voice, very low but very clear, said: 'Thank you, thank you, dearest Nell; I knew you had gone to fetch him.'

And then the sweet low voice said, in answer to Renshaw's gentle caress and cordial 'God bless you, my boy!'—'Thank you, sir; I wanted you to say that to me once more before I die: I like so much to hear you say it; but,' he added earnestly, 'they have prepared a place for me.'

'I haven't a doubt of it,' said Renshaw solemnly. 'But is there anything in particular you wish to say to me?'

'If you please, sir.'

'Tell me what it is, then. Do you wish to be alone with me?'

'O no, sir; I am so happy with father and mother, and Nelly and you.'

'Then tell me what you have to say.'

'First, sir: is there anything wrong in my calling my canaries Huz and Buz? They are brothers, you know.'

'No, no, my child; why should there be?'

'Well, they are Bible names, sir; and I was afraid—— But as you say there was no harm, and as I am sure I didn't mean any harm, I shall not say any more about it. Then I wanted to say, sir, that it's six years since the great ox trampled upon me and tossed me, and I've been lying here on that sofa ever since'

'Ah! my dear boy, you have had a severe trial——'

'Oh! it isn't that, sir; I mean all those six years father and mother have been so good to me.'

'My God, my poor boy,' sobbed Brentwood, 'don't break my heart by talking like that;' and Mrs Brentwood could do nothing but stroke the little one's head and weep speechlessly.

'And Nelly,' the sweet low voice went on, 'has done nearly everything for me all those years; and all the flowers, and my canaries, came from her; and nearly all her spare time has been spent in playing to me and singing to me, and reading to me and teaching me to read; and though I am a poor helpless little boy, I know she will feel so lonely when I am gone; and I want to ask you, please, sir, to be kind to father and mother, as you

have been to me, and to love Nelly as much as you can : will you, sir ?'

He held with one hand one of his weeping sister's hands, and, in his earnestness, took with his other one of Renshaw's hands, and placed it upon Nelly's, saying pleadingly : ' Oh ! will you, sir ? '

' Yes, yes, my boy ; you may depend upon it I will,' replied Renshaw, as he and Nelly instinctively withdrew their hands, without, however, any look of consciousness.

' Thank you, sir,' said the sweet low voice, adding ; ' you made me a little prayer soon after you first came to see me about two years ago, and I always say it at night, but I like to hear you say it best : will you say it, sir, and let me listen ? '

Renshaw complied ; and the boy's lips moved voicelessly in accompaniment. Afterwards he said : ' Nell, will you play my favourite hymn ? and we can all join in singing the first and last verses.'

They sang very softly, *Sun of my Soul, thou Saviour dear*; and the low sweet voice was less tremulous than the other voices, but when they reached 'Abide with me when night is nigh,' it ceased to be heard at all.

There was no struggle ; but the spirit of the child had gone quietly out of him.

So Renshaw stooped and kissed the still warm face, and left the bereaved alone with their dead.

INDUSTRY AND IDLENESS.

' TINE,' 'Tink'—how that blacksmith's hammered Stroke upon stroke for hours, In the grass while I've been dozing Among the April flowers. What is the use of toiling, Beating at iron bars ? Isn't it better lying Watching the daisy stars ?

Let Vulcan ply the bellows, And drive the hissing flame ; Let him sway the ponderous hammer Till the anvil groan his name. Let the red-hot iron soften, And bend beneath his tools ; To-day I'll be a truant From life's hard-working schools.

I'm idle as twenty sultans, Couched in the grass so green ; I wonder what those creatures In black and orange mean, Climbing with toilsome patience To the top of a stalk and stem, Once high above the meadow, To just walk down again !

O restless age, grow idle ; Come bask in the sun, and sing ; Wander and gather blossoms ; Inhale the scent of spring. Talk love beneath the hawthorn ; Forget the struggling hive ; Throw by your bags of coin, And cease for an hour to strive.

Yet just as I'm growing drowsy,

A blustering, bullying bee,
In his black and yellow velvet,
Comes with a rush at me,
Wondering why I'm idle,
When all the world's astir ;
And ere he's past on the holly,
Or the topmost shoot of that fir,

A busy thrush comes singing,
And the wild notes from the tree,
Borne on the southern breezes,
Come chiding lazy me ;
And far above me rises,
In the blue air clear and far,
The lark that's ever seeking
The hidden evening-star.

That grasshopper's vaulted past me
Five times since I turned to look
How yonder flashing swallows
Glance down the bend of the brook.
Oh, I alone am idle
In this never-resting world :

No ! there, for one brief moment,
That butterfly's wings are furled ;

But now again it's poising
O'er the golden sun outspread
Of a dandelion, glorious
In the light that it seems to shed ;
And here, in a long procession,
Come a train of ants at work ;
Contemptuous, they pass me—
I, a mere sleepy Turk.

Yes ! everything is toiling,
Moving from class to class ;
Even the little mushroom
Is pressing through the grass ;
And I alone am idle,
Watched by the pitying sun—
I, alone am shirking
The work that must be done.

The restless age is crying
To me to come and toil,
If I want my part of the treasure,
My share in the wine and oil.
These creatures are my warnings,
Their prophecies are plain ;
I'll up and away to Babel
By the fast 5.40 train.

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